

Mr. Carnahan: Mr. Speaker I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be here and to be part of this debate. I wanted to congratulate the bipartisan way in which this resolution was brought before this House with two Members of the Armed Services Committee, the chairman, IKE SKELTON from Missouri, and Republican Member JONES from North Carolina, and also Chairman Lantos of the Foreign Affairs Committee. I congratulate them in their leadership.

At a recent send-off of troops being redeployed from my home district in Missouri, I told the families that I would work in Congress to bring their loved ones home safe, sound and soon. However, this proposed military escalation flies in the face of that intention.

As we enter the fifth year of this mismanaged war in Iraq, with an ill-defined plan, it is irresponsible to think that an escalation is in the best interests of our troops. The Bush escalation plan is yet another indication that the President has failed to listen to the American public, military experts, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, and Democrat and Republican Members in this Congress.

Even General Colin Powell, the former Secretary of State, said, I am not persuaded that any surge of troops in Baghdad for the purposes of suppressing this communitarian violence, this civil war will work.

It is my solemn responsibility to act on behalf of Missouri constituents and their overwhelming desire for change. I am proud to see the new Congress has begun to systematically analyze the President's proposal regarding the war in Iraq.

Since the beginning of the year, we have already held 52 hearings in this Congress about the war in Iraq. Evidence this new Democratic-led Congress is exercising real oversight and demanding accountability on the Iraq war. We will continue to ask the tough questions about the President's plan, continue to insist on a new direction while always putting our troops first.

We have the best military in the world, and we owe our troops a clear mission. Our men and women in uniform have done their job two and three times over, and our civilian leadership must provide a clear, achievable objective so they can come home soon.

This Congress has a grave duty to listen and take action. Recently, the mother of a young soldier being deployed back to Iraq told me, Congressman Carnahan, I am one of those mothers who is against the war in Iraq, but my son volunteered to serve his country. Please be sure they get the support and equipment they need to come home quickly and safely.

That mother's heartfelt request is a powerful example of our national unity and resolve to support our troops and oppose this escalation policy that is not making the Iraq Government more self-reliant. In fact, it is using us further as a crutch.

It is not making the Middle East region more stable. In fact, many of our military leaders say our very presence there is fueling the insurgency, and it is not making our country safer. Today, the House begins a detailed deliberation on House Concurrent Resolution 63, which is only the beginning of this Congress's oversight of the President's strategy in Iraq.

This straight-forward resolution plainly expresses our support for the brave men and women who are currently serving or who have served in the Armed Forces. In my home State of Missouri, over 27,000 men and women have been deployed to serve in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraq Freedom since September 2001.

It is our duty as Members of Congress to ensure they have the necessary training, equipment, resources and support while in harm's way and when they return home.

When debate concludes this week, it is my firm hope that the result will be a bipartisan vote reflecting both our unwavering support of our troops and the reality that a fourth U.S. escalation is the wrong direction for our country.

As the new majority, we have the opportunity to develop a comprehensive and commonsense solution to enable us to protect our troops, maintain our obligation, and end this conflict as

quickly as possible. We stand ready to provide real peace of mind for the American people by securing our homeland and changing course in Iraq.

Great change is possible when this Congress acts in unison with the American public. In the weeks and months ahead, this Congress will act in a bipartisan way to carefully and thoroughly examine the President's proposals and pass decisions through hearings, debate and oversight using all tools available to change the direction of this war.

Most importantly, we will continue to support our troops in hopes of de-escalation of the war and escalation of the political solution for Iraq. Working together, Mr. Speaker, great change is possible.